

SOARING STONE
by Paul Rademacher

When Jacquie and I visited France ten years ago, we couldn't resist a stop at Chartres Cathedral. In spite of my fear of heights, we trudged up the narrow, winding staircase of the bell tower. As each successive window peeked out over an ever-ascending view of the city, the cathedral roof below grew distressingly distant. The flying buttresses, which looked so sturdy from the ground, revealed their impossibly weblike delicacy.

When we reached the top, I was clutching the inner wall, terrified to go near the railing. Being a builder, I knew that there was no way stone could be placed upon stone to such dizzying and precarious heights.

Gradually, I became acclimated to the altitude enough to look around. Then I saw something that astounded me. There, in a crevice utterly hidden from public view, was a stone carving of ethereal beauty.

"What a waste of artistic genius," I thought. "So few will ever see it."

Then ... I "got it." That carving was for the heavens to witness.

In that moment, the whole cathedral became infused with wonder and mystery. All at once, I understood that Chartres was not built simply for worship. It was crafted as a statement of human architectural and artistic prowess—an astonishing declaration of co-creative energy. This was not hubris on display, but childlike celebration, as if to say, "Mom! Dad! Look what we made!" The whole building suddenly came alive.

That aliveness was more than metaphorical. Every piece crafted by the *compagnon* was marked by a secret code that was in the language of the stone. In speaking to the stone, the builders were enlisting its aid in accomplishing the project. This living rock shaped the craftsman as much as the craftsman shaped the stone, and set in motion a mutual transformation.

In our Western culture, we are so used to distinguishing between animate and inanimate objects that this idea of living stone seems quite foreign. Yet modern quantum physics is gradually coming to the conclusion that consciousness may, in fact, be present in every aspect of our world. The *compagnons* may have known more than we realize.

I am convinced that The Monroe Institute is, itself, a living being that is larger and more encompassing than any one of us. It has its own intelligence and destiny. And like the

craftsmen who built the great cathedrals and who accomplished the impossible by making stone soar, we are being drawn into a seemingly impossible drama as well. It is a drama in which we are both shaping and being shaped.

This symbiotic dance challenges many of our hierarchical assumptions. It is not a “top-down” energy, but a flowing exchange on both an individual and a collective scale.

It is that collective scale that I think is the emerging edge. TMI has, for decades, done a wonderful job of facilitating individual transformation. As a result we have gradually assembled an extraordinary group of graduates who are pushing the boundaries of human development.

I believe the time has come for us to move to the next level: bringing together the expertise, skill, wisdom, discernment, and heart of this extraordinary group to engage transformation at a societal, perhaps even global, scale. Such transformation must move far beyond a preoccupation with material aims. As Peter Russell has said, “The events of this time are now soul-sized.”

The uniqueness of this collective effort is that it calls for immense individual creativity. In his book *We-Think*, Charles Leadbeater presents many concrete examples of huge projects being accomplished by self-organizing systems made up of individual voluntary contributors: mapping the human genome, Wikipedia, and the Linux operating system, to name just a few. *We-Think*, itself, is the product of many who contributed voluntarily because they cared about the project and because they were invited to participate.

This culture of participation rests on a simple premise: we are what we share. We receive to the extent we are willing to give up control.

This relinquishing of control is essential precisely because it allows for the possibility of a higher level of organization beyond individual creativity. It creates the space for a collaboration that is itself alive with desire, drive, and destiny. TMI is an emerging example of such lively collaboration that is crafting us, even as we are creating it.

And that is a magical energy. The right people are showing up at the right time. It is as if they have been waiting for something that has been tugging at them for years, maybe even lifetimes. An astonishing cathedral is taking shape. But the material we work with is not stone, but consciousness, creativity, soul, and spirit.

As I have traveled across the United States and Canada, that creative drive, that intense desire to share in an emerging vision has been abundantly evident. Something new is being built. The intriguing paradox is that this new collective effort does not require a crushing uniformity, but instead calls each of us to our highest and best. Each of us has a gift—an innate genius—to share.

Our task for the future is to provide a venue for expression of individual genius within the context of collective transformation. Like the soaring stone of Chartres Cathedral, it is a delicate and intricate balance that just might take us to dizzying, unimaginable heights.

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